

News from Ed Markey

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STUDY FINDS EARLY MISSILE DEFENSE TEST DID NOT PERFORM AS CLAIMED

Markey calls for independent oversight and testing milestones

WASHINGTON, D.C. --

Today Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) released a study by the General Accounting Office that concluded that the sensor used to discriminate between a warhead and decoys in a 1997 test of the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system did not work as claimed, despite repeated statements by the Pentagon that the test was successful.

"The National Missile Defense program needs independent oversight and testing milestones to ensure that it works before we spend countless billions of dollars deploying it," said Rep. Markey. "If it can't tell the warhead apart from a decoy, what good is it?"

The study was requested in response to allegations that the 1997 flight test did not work as successfully as was reported by the Pentagon and the contractors that conducted and/or analyzed the test. The study concluded that:

- The sensor cooling and calibration systems malfunctioned and the sensor often detected targets where there were none, even though the contractor described the sensor performance as "excellent" and even though the software contained prior knowledge of all the characteristics of the warhead and decoys used in the test.
- The contractor chose to analyze only about 12 seconds of data (out of more than 60 seconds taken) due to sensor malfunction and other problems. Towards the end of the flight test, the software began to incorrectly identify a decoy as the warhead. This data was eliminated from analysis by the contractor.
- The Phase One Engineering Team (POET) that reviewed the test did not verify whether the data was accurate or whether the software was able to successfully discriminate between a warhead and a decoy. Despite this, the POET review was used by the Pentagon to dismiss allegations of fraud associated with the software and the choice of data used to determine whether the software worked.
- Many of the problems and limitations of the flight test were not immediately disclosed by the contractors, and the contractors' claims that the system distinguished the warhead from the decoys have not been independently verified.

"In a real ballistic missile attack, the system would not have advance knowledge of what the warhead and the decoys looked like, the contractors would not have time to alter the software after the fact, and the sensor would have to work properly. Before we deploy a missile defense system, we need to

independently ensure that it works. I have introduced legislation, H.R. 2786, that calls for realistic testing milestones and independent oversight before moving forward with deployment," said Rep. Markey.

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